

Governor's Mansion  
"H" @ 16th Street  
Sacramento, Sacramento County

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
Western Office, Division of Design and Construction  
San Francisco, California

PHOTOGRAPH-DATA BOOK REPORT  
HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY

HABS  
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19-  
CAL-1886  
Page 1

GOVERNOR'S MANSION

Sacramento, Sacramento County, California

ADDRESS: 1524 H Street, Sacramento, California  
(SW corner of 16th and H).

OWNER: State of California.

OCCUPANT: Governor of California and family.

USE: Residence.

ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE:

Although its use as a Governor's Mansion dates only from 1903, this house has been a consistent pivotal center of 20th century political events in California, as well as the focus of important social history. Built as a private residence, it brings something of the grand scale of the silver age of the 1870's to the present day; although its architectural character is less distinguished than the former Fogus (later Stanford) home, it represents a particularly interesting combination of the disintegrating stylistic eclecticism of the Victorian era with an audacity of plan and elevation which lead to modern architecture. Its remarkable height on so flat a site gave it added prominence in the 19th century, as well as providing a symbolic centrality to the house (with its physical dramatic gas light in the tower) which has been reinforced by subsequent political occupants of the residence.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION:

Albert Gallatin, manager (and partner) of Huntington, Hopkins and Company, had a splendid new house built at the southwest corner of 16th and H. Gallatin (born 1835) was from New York State and was 31, when he first registered in Sacramento in early 1867. By the time he was 41, by early 1877, he could afford the services of the most fashionable architect in the city, Nathaniel Goodell who built himself a house (1854) at 911 O; the site is now ironically occupied by the State as a garage, just as Gallatin's house is State owned.

CAL-1886  
Page 2

Goodell was born in 1814 at Belchertown, Massachusetts. He is said to have come to Sacramento in 1849, after extensive building practices in the East. He is referred to as a "carpenter" in the Great Register of Sacramento for 1868, when he was 54 years old, which seems strange after so active an early life -- building an entire cotton mill town, 100 houses in the East and certainly much in Sacramento.

Goodell had N. M. Reese as his builder, and the Division of Architecture, State of California, Sacramento, has fortunately retained page 81 from Reese's ledger which refers to the Gallatin house (Reese misspells Gallatin's name as "Galetin"). This indicates that a total price of \$20,704.07 was established on June 20, 1877, and that Gallatin paid off the itemized cost by cash payments of about \$1,000 about every three weeks, until all was paid on April 27, 1878. This ledger page is particularly interesting as a revelation of various costs ("3 chimneys, \$9.00", etc.) of construction of the period, although the general contract price of \$14,500 seems to have been allocated to basic building with extras added as Gallatin and Goodell expanded their ideas.

Additions totaling about \$750.00 are noted up to 1880. The land cost must have been about \$5,000; the architect's fee (5% in this era) would have been \$1,000. It is hard to estimate the total cost of the furnishings, but \$35,000 seems a fair total cost for the house and grounds, with fittings, plus the cost of the stable if it was not included in the contract price. Gallatin replaced the wooden sidewalks with "artificial stone", in 1878. The house was sold to Joseph Steffens (originally from Canada, born in 1837) in 1888. Steffens, partner in Heather and Fuller's paint firm, long time president of the Chamber of Commerce, keeper of race horses, was the father of Lincoln Steffens, the "muck-rake" writer. On July 9, 1903, the building was acquired by the State, for \$32,000, as a Governor's Mansion. (There had been the unofficial mansions in the Governors' own homes, such as that of Stanford; the official Governor's Mansion behind the Capitol was turned into a printing office before 1900.) The interior was remodeled, and two rooms (one above the other) were added at the west as a servant's dining room (below), now Governor's family dining room and Governor's office (above), now a bedroom. The curious box-like north extension of the Governor's bedroom into a dressing room may have taken place at this time (the window in situ was moved north to be on the edge of this box). By 1907, the State had spent a total of \$54,000 on purchase and improvement of the Gallatin House. After 1919 sleeping porch revisions were planned, and executed in part, at the southeast corners of the home. The occupants have included: George C. Pardee (1903), James Gillett (1907), Hiram W. Johnson (1911), W. D. Stephens (1917), F. W. Richardson (1923),

CAL-1886  
Page 3

C. C. Young (1927), James Rolph, Jr. (1931), Frank F. Merriam (1934), Culbert Olson (1939), Earl Warren (1943), Goodwin Knight (1953) and Edmund G. Brown (1959). The building has been redecorated and repaired at various times since 1903. An attempted dynamiting of the structure was reported on December 19, 1917.

#### Gallatin

#### Supplemental Material and Sources:

Great Register of Sacramento for 1872.

Kirker, Harold. California Architecture in the 19th Century: A Social History--A thesis for the University of California (pp. 98, 318), now published as California's Architectural Frontier, Huntington Library, 1960.

Lewis, Oscar. Here Lived the Californians, New York, Rinehart, 1957, pp. 142-146.

Los Angeles Times, January 4, 1959 (Home Section), pp. 16-21.

Sacramento Bee, November 24, 1878; June 10, 1891, p. 5, c. 1-2.

Sacramento Union, September 24, 1905.

San Francisco Chronicle, July 9, 1903, p. 2-7.

San Francisco Examiner, December 19, 1917.

#### ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION:

The 4 story (with 6 story tower) wooden house for Albert Gallatin, now called the Governor's Mansion of California, is an interesting stylistic combination of the Italian Villa and the mixed ornamental language of the later 70's--borrowing extensively from the Eastlake phase of eastern design. The massing of the house is distinctly irregular, and shows the trend towards picturesque organization of parts common in American architecture after the Civil War. The central tower is a common feature on houses of the north-east and mid-west; however the mansard roofs are more often associated with the so-called Second Empire style of the late 60's and 70's (sometimes called the Franco-American, or the General Grant style). There are definite reminiscences of the Mannerist ornament of the later Italian Villa of the east similar to that

CAL-1886  
Page 4

found in Sacramento on the Crocker Art Gallery of 1873. Yet the bull's eye window of the tower, the incised foliate patterns in the cornice brackets, and the completely unclassical cornices of the porch point to a gradual debasement or "re-appraisal" of traditional sources. The pure Corinthian capitals (in cast iron as usual) of the porches are related to a persisting classicism in Sacramento architecture from the 50's on. The fact that the house is almost entirely of wood allows, of course, a greater freedom of formal expression; it is a kind of Empire Italian Villa, with classicizing details and its eccentricities are partly of the period, partly of material origin.

The principal stages of construction have been suggested in the Historical Information section. Nathaniel Dudley Goodell, the architect, was a well-known figure in Sacramento at this time, and this is the finest of his town residences remaining in the area. As a further indication of construction history, a copy of a ledger page from the builder's records is added to this report to allow comparison of construction dates and payments.

#### Exterior

Brick foundations (in the irregular bond of 4" x 8" bricks common to Sacramento), varying in thickness from 12 to 18 inches, support frame and sheath construction (balloon frame), with lapped horizontal board facing. Wood is used consistently throughout the exterior, except where cast iron (porch capital and cresting) was more acceptable. Patterned wooden shingles face the mansards; the iron cresting was removed by 1903.

#### Interior

The majestic sequence of halls and stair creates a major focus in this otherwise rather irregularly planned interior. Inside a vestibule, with original English tiles, one enters a long cruciform hall. To the right opens a library, largely furnished by Governor Hiram Johnson, but with a marble mantel bearing two open books with the initials A. G. (Albert Gallatin), apparently the only tangible evidence of the first owner. To the left of the main hall are two parlors, furnished in a combination of Victorian and modern pieces. The fine, multi-colored Italian marble fireplaces and pier glasses above are original. The valances (of wood and plaster) have been repainted and regilded.

At the south end of the hall, where it intersects the hall from the east and west entrances of the house is a large, formal dining room with cast plaster dado, featuring various fish,

HAB5  
CAL  
34-SAC  
19-

CAL-1886  
Page 5

fowl and fruits. Much of the furniture is 20th century. Fine 19th century brass hardware remains, especially in parts of the first floor.

On the second floor (actually the third) there are six bedrooms and four baths. Throughout the house, fine cast plaster ornaments of animals, real and fantastic, are used on doors and on door frames. On the third floor (actually the fourth), there are two bedrooms and one room with bathtub, and a lavatory attached to the west bedroom. The so-called ballroom at the northeast corner of the house on this floor (its fine two-color hardwood floor is apparent today) has been divided into a bedroom and an office for the Governor--which has become largely a trophy and souvenir display area. At the north end of the hall on this floor, a door leads into a small chamber, from which the stair ascends the tower in two flights. (The squared spiral is possibly a variant of a spiral in Goodell's own house, built in 1854). This is the most unimpaired section of the entire house, and is a masterpiece of elegant simplicity for its period. (The large Christmas lights framing the interiors of the window frames remain from the time of Mrs. Knight). A fine brass gasolier hangs in the center of the tower's top story.

### Site

The site is a quarter block at the southwest corner of 16th and H Streets, with house and an important stable, still more or less intact (the iron cresting on the house, removed before the Second World War, has a less ambitious echo in the iron cresting of the stable). The gazebo seen in the Thompson and West view of 1880 was dismantled sometime early in the 20th century; a swimming pool, with new planting, was presented to Governor Edmund G. Brown, and now occupies the site of the gazebo. Showers, interior changing rooms, etc., were fitted into the northwest corner of the stable (now garage). The second floor of the stable is currently unoccupied. The house was placed on a slight rise of ground; planting has been kept simple on all sides. The original cast iron fence surrounding the property remains.

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Albert Gallatin House  
(California Governor's Mansion)  
1527 H Street

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Addendum to  
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H and 16th Street  
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Sacramento County  
California

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REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

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